

March 23, 2016

State Board of Education
California Department of Education
1430 N Street, Room 1101
Sacramento, California 95814
916-319-0881

Dear Members of the Board of Education,

We write to you to clarify some of our rejected edits in the hope that they can be reconsidered (see attached). We regret that we were unable to prepare a response in time to deal with our suggestions marked “No Specific Edit Recommended” but will be happy to do so at a later date if possible.

We are well-aware, as a committee of diverse specialization and multi-disciplinary scholars, of the Greek and Roman sources on India, the critiques of Orientalism, the post-war origins of the term area studies, the uses of ethnography and of the value of cultural studies. Indeed, some of the scholars on the committee have addressed precisely these themes and critiques in their published work, and we can provide you with this material if helpful.

Had we entered this process at an earlier stage, we might have been able to recommend a blanket usage of key terms for what is essentially a thoughtful and responsive draft curriculum framework. Yet there is also a context-dependent logic to our use of ‘South Asia’, ‘India’ and the ‘Indian Subcontinent’ as descriptive categories in our edits (which we elaborate on in our attached response to Dr. Rajan’s suggestions), even as one of our committee members has used “India” in his work to refer to a civilization marked by landscape in relation to that society. In the framework, we find that when ‘India’ is the primary referent, ‘South Asia’ is the only way to describe, for example, the extent of the spread of Buddhist teachings, to Tibet or Sri Lanka. By the same token, the use of ‘Indian Subcontinent’ makes sense as a geographical description for things like oceanic trade or the layout of trans-Himalayan trade routes. Simply substituting the word ‘Indian Subcontinent’ for India or South Asia for the sake of consistency does not enhance the understanding of time and place that is key to giving learners a geographically and culturally textured sense of history. Especially striking in the commentary is the patent refusal to include other nation-states within South Asia such as Afghanistan, Pakistan, or Bangladesh as geographical referents where applicable. Should not students learn that the Indus Valley is located in present-day Pakistan? Or that ancient Gandhara was located partly in present-day Afghanistan? These are irrefutable geographical facts that all children should know. Our use of the term South Asia is not based on any desire to denigrate Hindus. Its use is merely a reflection of the modern day reality that the area includes several modern nation states that are included by referring to the entire area as South Asia; it is a standard term of reference outside of Area Studies as well.

We state clearly that we are not attempting to eradicate India or Hinduism from the draft framework as some groups have argued. The question is where in the curricular framework both subjects are best discussed. **We believe that discussion of Hinduism and of the modern nation state of India is best discussed, and indeed, profitably *expanded in later parts of the framework.*** We do not believe that Indian-American or Hindu-American children will be adversely affected by discussing these subjects in more advanced grade-levels. **We do believe that not only Indian and Hindu American children, but ALL 6th grade children in California will be negatively impacted from having inaccurate and misleading information reflected in the curriculum framework and textbooks.** There are too many problems that arise from trying to squeeze “Ancient India” and Hinduism into sections that treat the Indus Civilization which has no established link to the Rg Veda or to Hinduism. **We acknowledge that the Rg Veda is an important, if not the most important text for some groups of Hindus; but the Upanishadic, puranic, epic, and bhakti traditions are equally if not more important for larger numbers of Hindus.** We feel it is more respectful to the diversity and integrity of the Hindu tradition *to expand the discussion of Hinduism beyond the Vedic era.* If this cannot be done due to time constraints, then framework language about “Ancient India” needs to be carefully assessed to reflect the shared civilizational heritage of the Indus Valley that transcends the national borders of India, Pakistan and Afghanistan.

We believe reference in the current draft framework to the Saraswati river cannot be sustained without conflating modern India and ancient India; the references to the Saraswati in the Rg Veda as we explain in Appendix 2 of our report of November 18, 2015 are not linguistically convincing. The two archeologists on the committee concur that reference to the “Indus-Saraswati” rivers is not standard (although one has used it in past work), and that reference to the Indus-Ghaggar-Hakra system is more widely used by a group of international faculty that include several Indian scholars who have made decades of work on the Indus Valley available at the Harappa.com website (<https://www.harappa.com/experts>). We encourage the Board and the HSS Subject matter staff to consult this website in parsing suggested edits.

We recognize you have the difficult task of sorting through competing claims and of listening respectfully to divergent voices. We are aware that other individuals—some whom are faculty at non-research institutions, and others who claim to be scholars, have made submissions. In some cases their edits agree with or overlap with ours. We encourage you to identify areas of overlap where they exist, and when they diverge, to err on the side of multi-disciplinary scholarly opinion.

We are available to consult with you at any time to answer your questions and to clarify any of our recommendations.

Yours Sincerely,

1. Chris Chekuri, Associate Professor, History Department, San Francisco State University.
2. Shahzad Bashir, Lysbeth Warren Anderson Professor of Islamic Studies, Department of Religious Studies, Stanford University.
3. Robert Goldman, Catherine and William L. Magistretti Distinguished Professor of South and Southeast Asian Studies, University of California, Berkeley.
4. Stephanie Jamison, Distinguished Professor of Asian Languages and Cultures and of Indo-European Studies, University of California, Los Angeles.
5. Jonathan Mark Kenoyer, Professor of Anthropology at the University of Wisconsin, Madison. (Field Director and Co-Director of the Harappa Archaeological Research Project since 1986).
6. Gurinder Singh Mann, former Kundan Kaur Kapany Chair in Sikh Studies and Professor Emeritus, University of California, Santa Barbara.
7. Projit B. Mukarji, Meyerson Assistant Professor of History & Sociology of Science, University of Pennsylvania.
8. Vijaya Nagarajan, Associate Professor in the Department of Theology and Religious Studies, University of San Francisco.
9. Shailaja Paik, Assistant Professor of South Asian History, University of Cincinnati.
10. Ramnarayan Rawat, Professor of History, University of Delaware.
11. Sudipta Sen, Professor of History, University of California, Davis.
12. Banu Subramaniam, Professor of Women, Gender, Sexuality Studies, University of Massachusetts, Amherst.
13. Thomas R. Trautmann, Professor Emeritus of History, University of Michigan.
14. Kamala Visweswaran, Professor of Ethnic Studies, University of California, San Diego.
15. Rita P. Wright, Professor of Anthropology, New York University, and member of the NYU Center for Human Origins.

Ex-Officio Members of the Committee

Lawrence Cohen, Professor of Anthropology and Sarah Kailath Chair of India Studies, Director of the Institute for South Asia Studies, University of California, Berkeley

Akhil Gupta, Professor of Anthropology and Director of the Center for India and *South Asia*, *University of California, Los Angeles*

Thomas Hansen, Reliance-Dhirubhai Ambani Professor of South Asian Studies and Anthropology, Director, Center for South Asia, Stanford University

Smriti Srinivas, Director, Middle East/*South Asia* Studies Program, University of California, Davis

Consultants

Asad Q. Ahmad, Associate Professor of Arabic and Islamic Studies at the University of California, Berkeley

Shampa Chatterjee, Research Associate Professor of Physiology in the Institute for Environmental Medicine, University of Pennsylvania

Kathleen D. Morrison, Neukom Family Professor and Chair of the Department of Anthropology and the Committee on Southern Asian Studies, University of Chicago

Sheldon Pollock, Arvind Raghunathan Professor of South Asian Studies, Columbia University

Luis González-Reimann, Ph. D. South Asian Studies, University of California, Berkeley